
Friends of the Newark Free Library: Awareness & Membership Outreach Initiative

By Lisa Brown

Hello! I'm Lisa Brown, and I will be discussing the Awareness and Membership Outreach Campaign I created for the Friends of the Newark Free Library.

Background

- Friends of Newark Free Library (FNFL) is preparing a capital campaign to raise 1 million dollars for the new library.
- Currently 300 members (235 active).
- Research has shown that FNFL is a well-kept secret.
- This presents an opportunity to raise awareness and drive participation.

In anticipation of their capital campaign to raise \$1 million from within the community as a good faith show of support toward the new library project, Friends of the Newark Free Library is actively seeking to expand its reach and influence. They aim to elevate both awareness and membership, with the goal of building a stronger donor network to ensure the success of this ambitious endeavor. The organization currently has around 235 members and serves the community of Newark, DE which has a population of 30,000.

I interviewed 2 internal stakeholders, who are members of the board (Polly Sierer and Barbara Jo German) as well as 2 members of the target public. This what we call primary research because it was obtained by interviewing people directly.

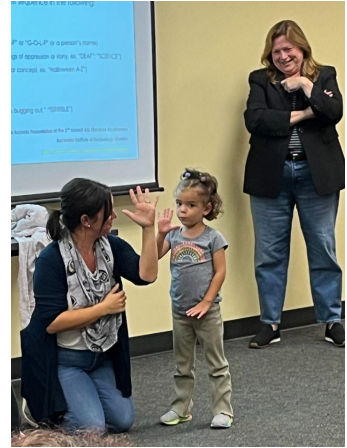
I also conducted secondary research - and this is research that was collected by someone else. My secondary research included news articles, the Friends newsletter.

Research has confirmed what the Friends group has suspected: that their group is a well-kept secret. None of the target market interviewees were aware of the Friends group, despite being enthusiastic library-users and book-lovers. This presents an opportunity to raise awareness and drive participation so people know about the organization AND what they do.

Situation Analysis

Strengths

- Amazing programs: author visits, childrens storytimes, and music events.
- The recent letter-writing campaign resulted in 35 new memberships.
- Word of mouth has been very effective.
- Sometimes people just want to join to donate.



Let's take a closer look at the strengths of the Friends group! First, they put on some really amazing programs, including author visits, childrens storytimes, and musical events.

They also had a letter-writing campaign that resulted in 35 new memberships. This shows us how word of mouth has worked really well in the past. Since members are the group's biggest advocates, we can use them to help spread the word, and bring more friends in.

Another strength is that some folks just want to join as a way to donate money because they believe in what we're doing and they want to be a part of something meaningful.

Situation Analysis

Weaknesses

- New members looking for opportunities that The Friends doesn't currently provide.
- The board might not be willingness to spend money to grow.
- Lacking incentives to join.
- The general public is unaware The Friends of Newark Free Library exists.

Of course, there some areas where we could improve.

Some new members might be looking for personal growth opportunities that we don't provide.

Also, while there is money in reserves that can be put toward this campaign, there has been speculation that the board might not be willing to spend it.

In addition, we really don't have many perks for joining.

And also, not everyone out there knows the Friends group exists.

Situation Analysis

Opportunities

- Create awareness among the community.
- Let people know why they should join.



Now, let's look at our opportunities.

First, we've have an opportunity to be the talk of the town and create some buzz. To let folks know the Friends group is here and it's fun to be a part of.

Second, we need to let people know WHY they should join.

Situation Analysis

Threats

- Political tension around libraries.
- Misconception that we don't need libraries because everything is online.



Now, there are some threats we need to keep in mind. Libraries have become places of political tension. While the Newark Free Library hasn't faced community backlash, it's important to note that we currently live in a culture where this is occurring. There's a misconception that everything is online now, so people don't need libraries.

Core Problem:

1. Increase awareness and promote the FNFL to encourage greater community participation in the upcoming capital campaign.



With the upcoming capital campaign to raise one million dollars to build a new library, the Friends group urgently requires greater visibility, especially among existing library users. There's a feeling that people would join the group if they knew about it. Our goal is to make that happen.

Goals & Objectives:

1. Increase awareness of FNFL.
 - a. Triple awareness of FNFL within 1 year.
2. Increase FNFL membership.
 - a. Double membership from 235 to 470 members within 1 year.



Our first goal is to Increase awareness of the Friends group so it becomes a recognized and valued part of the Newark Community.

Specifically, we'd like to triple awareness of the Friends group within 1 year.

Our second goal is to increase membership.

More specifically, we'd like to double membership from 235 members to 470 members within 1 year.

Big Idea Strategy

Individuals can enrich their lives through meaningful connections at the FNFL.



The big idea for this campaign is that by joining the Friends, individuals can enrich their lives through meaningful connections and support.

The goal is to emphasize the *friends* in The Friends of The Newark Free Library.

What do friends do?

They spend time together.

They have fun together.

They help each other.

Make memories together.

All of these are things that becoming a member of the Friends group can bring to people.

Key Public: The Newark Community

Messages

- The FNFL invests in the library through by funding programs, events, and resources.
- It's fun to be a member of the FNFL.

Objective

- Triple awareness within 1 year.



Our first key audience is the Newark Community. With this group, we're focusing on messages that highlight how the Friends group supports the library by funding various programs, events, and resources. The idea is to emphasize that being a member of the Friends group is about supporting the library and having fun while doing it.

Our main objective, is to significantly increase awareness of FNFL within the Newark Community. We're aiming to triple that awareness within the next year.

Strategy

- Spread awareness of the FNFL
 - **Consensus** - People look to actions of others to determine their own.
 - **Reciprocity** - If we giving people something, they'll feel obligated give something back to us in return - like becoming a member.
 - **Accessibility theory** tells us that since people just went to a FNFL event, they're more likely to support it.
 - **Consistency** - Ask attendees if they enjoyed an event. If they like FNFL programs, why shouldn't they join?

Our strategy is all about getting the word out about the Friends group.

If you've ever noticed how when other people do something, we're more likely to follow suit? That's what we call consensus. So, if people see others supporting FNFL, they're more likely to jump on board.

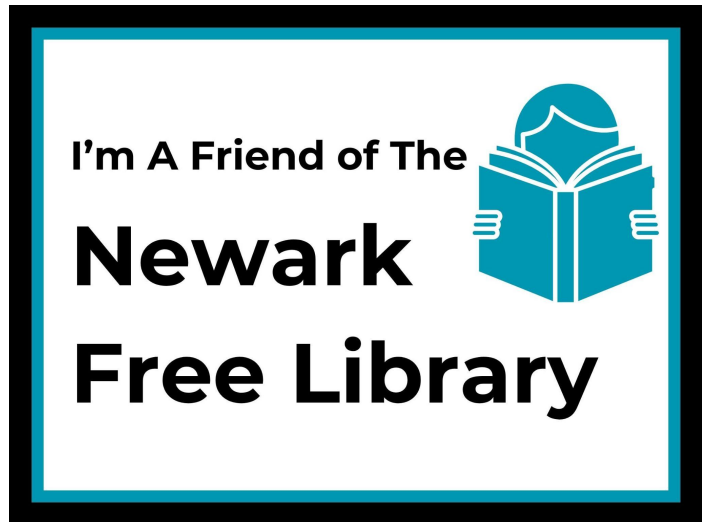
Then there's reciprocity. It's the idea that if we give folks something – like, amazing Friends events or even just free snacks – they'll feel a bit of an obligation to give back. Hopefully, that “something back” is becoming a member.

Accessibility Theory tells us that if people just attended a Friends event, they're more likely to throw their support behind it.

And finally, there's consistency. If someone already likes what FNFL is doing, we should ask them if they'd like to take the next step and becoming a member. It's all about building on what they already enjoy.

Tactic: Yard Signs

- All FNFL members
- Consensus
- Consistency



The first tactic is to invite all Friends members to display a yard sign to show support for the FNFL. When the public sees these signs, they will be more willing to join and put up their own yard sign, because they see other people like them doing it.

The yard signs will also be used to show consistency. When we contact our members, we'll ask if they'll agree to have a yard sign placed in their yard. If they say no, we'll ask them if we could send them a small window sticker to place in their window. Follow-up with these individuals in 3 months to see if they'd like to add a yard sign, because studies have shown that this technique can increase the number of people who put up a yard sign by 400%.

I can email this sign to Sue along with other documents I have created for this campaign after our meeting.

Tactic - Letter-Writing Campaign

- Invite ALL FNFL members.
- Each member writes letters to 10 people.
- Fun atmosphere: Drinks and food served.
- Scheduled for May to capitalize on new Members' excitement.



We're also going to have a letter-writing campaign, based off of the success of the the previous letter-writing campaign. This time, we're inviting ALL members of FNFL to a letter-writing party. As with the last campaign, each member writes a letter to 10 people, asking them to join the FNFL. To keep the atmosphere fun, drinks and food will be served.

This will be in May so it can build off of the new members.

Key Public: Library users age 30+

Messages

- FNFL invests in the library through funding programs and resources.
- FNFL is a community dedicated to enhancing the library.
- Public funding falls short; FNFL bridges the gap for essential community services.
- Libraries play a crucial role in building strong communities.



Objective

- Gain 235 new members in this key public within 1 year.

Our other key audience is library-users age 30 and above.

With this group, we're focusing on messages that highlight how the Friends group supports the library by funding various programs, events, and resources. We want people to know that the Friends group makes the library they love even better, and that public funding isn't enough to provide the programs the community needs. We also want to emphasize the important role libraries play in building strong communities.

Our main objective, is to gain 235 new members within this key public within 1 year.

Strategy

- Since this key public is already *going* into the library ALREADY values the library. We just need to convince them to join the FNFL!
 - **Consensus** - People look to actions of others to determine their own.
 - **Reciprocity** - If we giving people something, they'll feel obligated give something back to us in return - like becoming a member.
 - **Accessibility Theory** tells us that since people just went to a FNFL event, they're more likely to support it.
 - **Consistency** - Ask attendees if they enjoyed an event. If they like FNFL programs, it would make sense for them to want to join.

Since this key public is already *going* into the library ALREADY values the library. We just need to convince them to join the Friends group!

Our strategy is going to employ the same ideas we used for the newark community - consensus, reciprocity, accessibility theory, and consistency.

Tactic - Restructure Membership Levels



- Revamp levels with perks at different tiers.
- Featured on FNFL's social media, website, and flyers.
- Let members choose committees at sign-up.
- Empowerment leads to retention and renewals.

First, we'll restructure the membership levels to make being a part of the Friends group even more rewarding, complete with perks and swag at different tiers. This means more value for our members. They get to be part of something great AND enjoy some awesome perks along the way.

These new membership levels will be featured on our social media, website, and on flyers.

Second, when someone signs up to be a member, on the signup page, they'll also be able to choose which committees they want to be a part of. Empowerment leads to engagement, so letting our members choose how they contribute helps us to keep them as members AND as active, involved participants.

Tactic - Restructure Membership Levels

\$20-\$49 - Friend

- Magnetic Bookmark
- Window Sticker
- Invitation to Spring Luncheon
- Subscription to Monthly E-Newsletter



\$50-\$99 - Best Friend

- Yard Sign
- Magnetic Bookmark
- Window Sticker
- Invitation to Spring Luncheon
- Subscription to Monthly E-Newsletter

\$100-\$199 - True Friend

- Friends Tote Bag
- Yard Sign
- Magnetic Bookmark
- Window Sticker
- Invitation to Spring Luncheon
- Subscription to Monthly E-Newsletter



Currently, membership levels are based on what a person is donating as - a student, individual, business, ect. But, we've learned people don't donate based on what they are, they just want to donate a certain amount of money. To take advantage of this behavior, all membership levels are done based on a donation range. This will make it easy for everyone to donate exactly what they want.

Our lowest level starts at \$20, and includes what those members already receive - an invitation to the spring luncheon as well as an email newsletter. We're also adding in a window sticker and magnetic bookmark.

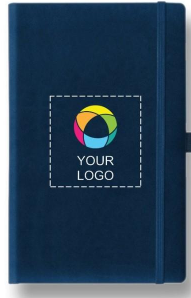
The next level is \$50-\$99, which adds a yard sign.

For the \$100-\$199 range, they also get a tote bag. This could be done by giving them a voucher for a tote bag that they can redeem at the library. This would keep mailing costs down as well as ensure that only people who want the item will get the item.

Tactic - Restructure Membership Levels

\$200-\$499 - Visionary Friend

- Premium Journal
- Friends Tote Bag
- Yard Sign
- Magnetic Bookmark
- Window Sticker
- Invitation to Spring Luncheon
- Subscription to Monthly E-Newsletter



\$500+ - Lifetime Friend (Lifetime Membership)

- Commemorative Brick at New Library
- Premium Journal
- Friends Tote Bag
- Yard Sign
- Magnetic Bookmark
- Window Sticker
- Invitation to Spring Luncheon
- Subscription to Monthly E-Newsletter



For \$200-\$499 we add on a premium journal notebook.

And our top tier, which was the \$500 lifetime membership, we've changed this to the **\$500+** tier, which lets donors know they can donate above the \$500 as much as they like. And, for this tier, we have added a commemorative brick at the new library. This honors their donation, as well as creates a permanent way to commemorate their lifetime status. And, it seems only fair that current lifetime members will also be able to have commemorative brick in their honor as well.

Tactic - Lunch At The Library

- Bring library staff lunch once a month.
 - Discuss the Friends group, upcoming events, initiatives, and see if they have any questions, comments, or concerns.
 - Go over promotional material about upcoming events.



Our next tactic is lunch at the library. This gives us a chance to express our appreciation for our hardworking library staff as well as involve them in the exciting initiatives of our Friends group.

Sharing a meal fosters camaraderie and opens avenues for genuine conversations. This gives us an opportunity to connect with library staff, and align our goals. During these lunches, we'll talk about, upcoming events, initiatives, and how their involvement can make a significant impact.

Tactic - Informational Flyer Handout



Distribute FNFL Flyers to patrons by having librarians hand them out during the book checkout process.

Three times a year, we will ask librarians to give patrons flyers during the checkout process. This is a simple, yet powerful way to promote the Friends group to library users age 30+. The librarians also have a personal connection to the group, as we bring the staff lunch once a month, so they have a good reason to help us promote the group in a genuine way.

A simple “And here’s info about joining the Friends group, they’re amazing!” could go a long way in attracting new members.

Tactic - Event Intro & Sign-up Table



- Event introduction
- Membership signup table
 - Snacks for attraction & flyers for awareness
 - Conversation and feedback
 - Small favor request
 - Invitation
 - Sign-up and swag on the spot

First a representative from the Friends group will introduce the event to attendees, setting the stage for engagement.

Attendees are informed they can sign up to join FNFL at the table in the main library. The tables will have snacks to draw people in as well as informational flyers.

Ask attendees if they enjoyed an event. If they did, ask them to sign a petition saying they support the library, creating a small commitment. Then, ask them if they'd be interested in joining the Friends group. The representatives will be able to sign them up there, right on the spot, as well as give them their new-member swag, providing instant gratification **as well as** instant involvement in the group.

Tactic - Book Sale

- Promotional signage at Library
- Utilize librarian network to spread the word
- Friends table set up



Book sales are a great way to draw people to the library. So, It's important to create this community event, as well as capitalize on the potential members it will bring to the library.

In addition to targeting the general public, our book sale will also be used to target library-patrons ages 30+ . To target this group, we will have promotional flyers and signs at the library to promote this event. We will also make sure to talk about the book sale during our Lunch at the Library, with the hopes that library employees will help us promote the book sale.

During the book sale, we'll have a sign-up table, just as we do for all of our events, to sign up new members.

Tactic - Ice Cream Day

- Celebrate National Ice Cream Day with FREE ICE CREAM!
- Friends table set up



And, I can't think of a better way to demonstrate how the Friends group as a fun part of the Newark community than by celebrating National Ice Cream Day with FREE ICE CREAM for everyone who attends. This event is open for all, but we're going to focus on promoting it to library patrons age 30+.

This is our chance to show library-goers that we're a fun group that's fun to be a part of. We put on some amazing programs, and would love to have them as a member. Perhaps when we give them something, they'll feel an urge to give something back through joining.

Timeline

[illegible]

Budget

Tactic	Estimated Cost	Notes
Restructure Membership Levels w/ swag		
500 Window stickers 4"x4"	\$623	https://www.stickeryou.com/products/window-clings/651
500 Magnetic Bookmarks	\$245	https://www.4imprint.com/product/108534-125/Magnetic-Bookmark-4-c
300 Tote Bags	\$657	https://www.vistaprint.com/clothing-bags/bags/totes/all-purpose-5-oz-co
300 Premium Journal Notebooks	\$1,884	https://www.vistaprint.com/promotional-products/writing-office/padfolio-1
250 Yard Signs for New Members	\$558	
50 Commemorative Bricks	\$950	https://www.brickrus.com/pricing?http://www.brickrus.com/bricks-for-
Letter-writing Campaign	\$250	300 letters, envelopes, postage
Yard Signs to Current Members - 250	\$558	
Lunch at the Library	\$2,700	15 employees, \$15 each = \$225/month
Flyer Handout at Checkout	\$50	100 copies, 2-up
Event Intro & Sign Up Table	\$1,040	Est. \$20 in snacks each week
Ice Cream Event - 200 people	\$1,000	https://www.benjamin.com/cityplace/catering/ice-cream-part-catering
ESTIMATED TOTAL	\$8,990	

Here you can see the estimated budget. These numbers are just estimates, but I have included links to where I sourced the prices from, so you can have those for reference.

Evaluation

1. **Our first objective is to triple awareness of FNFL within 1 year.** To calculate that, first we will conduct a survey to calculate initial awareness.
 - a. We will conduct quarterly awareness surveys to track our progress.
2. **Our second objective is to double membership from 235 active members to 470 active members within 1 year.**
 - a. We will track membership monthly through WildApricot to make sure we're on track to track our progress toward this objective.

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